

6917 NE Mallory Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97211
January 16, 2009

In reply to: MPA Proposal to Withdraw From New England Competition

Maine Principals Association
50 Industrial Drive
P.O. Box 2468
Augusta, ME 04338-2468

Dear Sir or Madam:

The proposal by the Maine Principals Association to cut the State's involvement in New England Cross-Country and Track and Field Championships in an effort to cut costs is immensely disappointing and a serious setback to the State's running community. I respectfully ask you as a Maine principal to vote to maintain the State's status as a New England Championships competitor.

The New England Championship system is the gateway for Maine's truly elite high school athletes to compete against national class competition. The New England Championships also provide a fair ranking of Maine's track and field and cross-country athletes against themselves as athletes from across the state compete regardless of class. For a majority of Maine athletes competing at New England meets, it is their first chance to race against high caliber runners and achieve the priceless memories of racing for their high school and state on a larger stage.

Historically, Maine is one of the top performing states at the New England Championships and repeatedly places athletes in the top ten. These athletes are first-class ambassadors for the State to the rest of the region and country. Maine's superior high school runners are well-respected people in their community and coached by their massively knowledgeable coaches who double as their math or English or art teachers. They aren't elitist athletes removed from their hometowns to train at expensive facilities while being watched over by sports doctors and professional coaches. Maine's runners come from across the state and have built their success and character by logging countless miles on the state's trails and back roads. The New England Championships is where the hard work of these young men and women from Maine is revealed to the nation, and, year-in and year-out, with resounding success.

While competing for Falmouth High School, I had the chance to compete at three New England Cross-Country Championships in Thetford, Vermont, Warwick, Rhode Island, and at Riverside in Portland my senior year. My first trip as a sophomore to Vermont was my first chance to be tested against the state and region's best while wearing Falmouth's colors. Although the weather was brutal and the course taxing, the atmosphere before, during, and after the meet was electrifying. It is one of my

fondest memories from my high school career and it would be a complete shame to take that chance away from future Maine athletes. And, the only costs were travel in my parent's station wagon, which they paid for themselves, and the small entry fee, paid by the school.

My senior year of high school cross-country was capped with the New England Championships at Riverside Golf Course in Portland. The pride of all the Maine racers, teams, and parents was widely felt as we raced 5,000-meters on our home soil. It had been years since the New England Championships were held in Maine, and for all athletes, coaches, and parents involved it was a very successful, moving, and meaningful day. For my family, and myself it was a perfect final chapter in my high school cross-country career. It would be a disgrace to Maine's running community to take the experience I was able to have away from those racing today in efforts save a few dollars on entry fees, fees that most teams pay themselves with booster money.

Experience gained from these meets prepares athletes raised in Maine for success across the country, and, in some cases, the national and world stage. I, personally, continued from the New England Championships to the Footlocker Championships and onto a successful college career at the University of Maine. Now, my running's taken me to a Nike team in Oregon where I helped my team finish second at the U.S. Club Cross-Country Championships this past December. Other Maine runners who have raced at New England meets have gone onto have impressive college careers, won college titles and set countless records, have raced at NCAA Regional and National Championships, U.S. Championships, the Olympic Trials, and other world-class competitions. I firmly believe, and I have the history to back up this statement, without racing at the New England Championships Maine's premier runners are at a disadvantage to be scouted by college coaches and their progression as runners onto the national stage is stunted.

If the MPA is successful in removing Maine from New England competition to save a minute amount of money, the success of Maine's future supreme athletes may go unrealized, the state will lose an incredible group of its best ambassadors, and past athletes who have raced for their Maine high schools against New England, such as myself, will be greatly disrespected and disappointed. I urge you as a principal of a Maine high school to take the New England Competition off the budgetary chopping block. I am asking you to do this to preserve Maine's high standing in New England competition and to give future athletes the same opportunities I had while running for a Maine high school.

If you need more reasons why not to withdraw Maine from the New England Championships, after classes are out this week, walk down to the gym and talk with your school's track and cross-country teams and coaches, or call their parents. It is their future success that is at stake.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter with me further, please do not hesitate to call (503-206-8316) or write me (kdavis411@gmail.com).

Sincerely yours,
Kirby Davis
Falmouth High School, 2003
University of Maine, 2007